

New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to strongly and fervently denounce hate crimes in any form anywhere in America.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, this country has witnessed a shocking rise in hate crimes against Asians and Asian Americans. Between the onset of the pandemic to the end of last year, there have been over 2,800 reported incidents of racism and discrimination against Asian Americans.

In New York City, an Asian woman was waiting in line at a bakery when she was brutally pushed to the ground, hitting her head. On the New York City subway, racial slurs have been uttered toward Asian riders and seniors have been physically attacked. In fact, in 2020, the NYPD reported that 10 percent of all bias attacks were targeted towards Asians. That is a ninefold increase over the incidents probed in 2019.

I am proud to represent New York City's Chinatown on the lower east side of Manhattan and Brooklyn's Chinatown around 8th Avenue in Sunset Park.

On February 12, I joined so many others in welcoming in the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Ox. But this year, a dark undercurrent and collective anxiety around the rise in violence dampened the celebrations.

It goes without saying that my constituents and every one of our constituents ought to be able to go to work, walk to the grocery store, or ride public transportation without fear of a bigoted and even dangerous attack.

Mr. Speaker, this is not who we are as a nation. We do not let xenophobia, racism, and violence run rampant on our streets, in our cities, in our hearts. No. We take pride in our diversity. We understand that what brings us together is far greater than what divides us. And we need to bring justice to all the victims of these heinous crimes.

I am glad that in New York City, our mayor has created the Asian Hate Crime Task Force, and I encourage other cities and localities to take similar action.

We also need a sustained Federal presence to combat and prevent hate crimes. That is why in the past I have introduced legislation to allocate \$50 million in Federal funds to help prevent, track, and prosecute hate crimes and assist victims. I look forward to reintroducing this bill.

I was also proud to cosponsor my colleague, Representative GRACE MENG's, resolution to denounce the anti-Asian sentiment that has occurred since the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Every one of us, everyone, has a responsibility to condemn and speak out against these attacks.

RECOGNIZING LIEUTENANT COMMANDER MICHAEL J. HALL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MOORE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the contributions of Lieutenant Commander Michael J. Hall to his community, country, and the fight against COVID-19.

Service to one's country is rarely convenient, particularly not for a father of four with a thriving orthopedic surgery practice. Yet, in September 2019, Dr. Hall overcame adversity to join the Navy Reserve at the age of 48.

Earlier that year, one of Mike's boys showed interest in joining the Navy. A concerned father, Dr. Hall wanted to speak directly to the recruiter. By the end of the call, he inquired about joining himself.

Just 6 months after his commissioning, Dr. Hall was given 36 hours' notice to voluntarily deploy to hard-hit New York City, wearing the only uniform he had without having even completed his basic officer training.

While many of us were scrambling to buy toilet paper, Dr. Hall fought an unknown virus in a makeshift ICU unit with dozens of intubated patients.

Now a seasoned veteran of this pandemic with a deployment under his belt, Dr. Hall is finally attending his basic officer training. No amount of instruction can teach the qualities that Mike Hall already personifies: honor, courage, and commitment, not when it was convenient, but when it mattered most.

Inspired by his father, Mike's son has now also joined the military, building on a new family vision formed in a makeshift ICU ward during a very dark spring in New York City.

Dr. Hall, I thank you for your service, and Mrs. Hall, I thank you even more for your service. You have made Ogden proud.

RESCUE AMERICANS NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the American Rescue Plan. This past January marked 1 year since the first case of coronavirus was found in the United States. In my home State of Alabama, nearly 10,000 people have contracted COVID-19 and almost 9,000 have died, and over half a million of the workers have filed for unemployment.

We know that the effects of this pandemic have disproportionately impacted our communities of color and low-income workers, who are more likely to be frontline workers and less likely to be able to afford access to quality healthcare.

Thankfully, because of the leadership of the new Biden administration, we recently witnessed a record drop in COVID cases and hospitalizations in Alabama; and with over 815,000 vaccine doses administered in our State, hope is finally on the horizon.

That said, we have a long way to go before there are enough of the vaccines

available to our communities to be really safe from the virus.

As this pandemic continues, I know Alabama families are struggling to make ends meet.

The time for decisive action is now. I strongly support the American Rescue Plan because it will not only crush the virus, but also help us to get back to schools safely, as well as to provide emergency financial support to struggling families and small businesses.

First, the President's American Rescue Plan will create a national vaccination program that will make sure that underrepresented communities are not left behind. The bill also ramps up testing and contact tracing, increases the supply of critically needed PPE, and makes healthcare more accessible by enhancing the Advanced Premium Tax Credit.

That was so important to so many Americans who could not afford otherwise to purchase quality healthcare coverage. This is critical in a non-Medicaid expansion State like Alabama, where people have fewer available healthcare coverage options.

Secondly, the American Rescue Plan delivers immediate financial relief to working families. This bill would provide critically needed \$1,400 economic assistance checks to individuals so we can help families recover and cover the costs of necessary expenses, like childcare, groceries, rent, utilities, and so much more.

I also fought to ensure that the unemployment insurance was extended and expanded to \$400 a week from \$300 a week. This is so important. When we think about the fierce urgency of now, we know that the unemployment, the Federal pandemic unemployment insurance benefits will actually expire March 14 if we do not act. That is why it is so incredibly important that we here in Congress do our part.

I also worked with my colleagues in the Ways and Means Committee to ensure that the American Rescue Plan includes important provisions for our most vulnerable families. I am proud that the package includes an additional \$7.6 million in childcare funding for the State of Alabama, which will help our frontline and hourly workers, who have been our true heroes in this pandemic.

Furthermore, the package provides over \$10 million for Alabama through a TANF pandemic emergency fund so that families with necessary emergency needs get the essentials that are so necessary for their survival.

I am especially proud this bill will also include lifesaving expansion to child tax credit and earned income tax credit, and I have championed that for many years. In my district alone, 53 percent of the children do not receive the full benefits of this credit because it is not fully refundable. We will make it fully refundable and we will expand it, lifting millions of children out of poverty.

This bill also provides direct support to local government, cities, and counties directly who have not benefited from their States directly. This is critically important to small communities and large communities all across this Nation.

Finally, the American Rescue Plan supports our small businesses and our frontline workers in our minority communities. In this bill, we expand PPP eligibility and we provide critical resources to our frontline healthcare workers, transit workers, and teachers.

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Mr. Speaker, economists and healthcare experts agree, if we do not take bold action now, we will have more deaths later and risk an economic downturn.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking my colleagues, both Republicans and Democrats, to listen to President Biden's call for bipartisanship and pass this bill.

I am reminded during this Black History Month of the powerful words of Dr. Martin Luther King, who said, "We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right."

Mr. Speaker, let's pass this package so that we can begin to Build Back Better and reassure our constituents that help is indeed on the way.

FUND LOCAL AND STATE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Iowa (Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, in the coming days, the House is expected to vote on a \$1.9 trillion spending bill that the majority claims will help fight the COVID-19 crisis. Despite this massive price tag, less than one-half of 1 percent of those dollars in this bill will go to fund a local and State public health workforce.

As a former director of the Iowa Department of Public Health, I have seen firsthand the great work our local public health departments do, and I know how necessary they are in this fight against COVID-19. It is unthinkable to me that any so-called COVID relief bill will dedicate such a miniscule portion of its funding to local public health departments, the same departments that are in our community, with us every day, working around the clock to defeat this pandemic. In contrast, FEMA is allocated \$50 billion, and they have no medical personnel to dispense vaccines.

Mr. Speaker, if we are serious about defeating this virus, I urge my colleagues to prioritize our public health officials and those on the frontline against COVID-19, instead of directing billions of dollars to programs and initiatives unrelated to this crisis.

This funding should go as a pass-through to the CDC and directly to

noncompetitive, local public health grants.

In our 99 counties in Iowa, local public health officials are intelligent, experienced, and capable to dispense vaccines in a rapid and efficient process. They have proven their capabilities by setting up drive-through clinics for flu vaccines, and also in the H1N1 pandemic as well. And given their preparedness training, they have worked with our local emergency management associates to do drive-through testing. These are the same nurses and individuals who live in your communities and who have vaccinated your children and have been the source of information and calm and support throughout this crisis.

Mr. Speaker, let's work together to defeat this virus by supporting our State and local public health teams by getting them the funding they need directly to them at the community level through noncompetitive, local public health grants. Acknowledging the tremendous work that our local public health workforce does on a daily basis and funding their efforts will defeat this virus and get America back on its feet.

AMERICAN RESCUE PACKAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, none of us can rise to the floor of the House and talk about the cruciality of the American Rescue package and the absolute imperative nature of this particular legislation passing without acknowledging 500,000 lives—not numbers, but names of mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles and cousins, sisters and brothers, just plain good friends, and loved ones that extend beyond one's family. And then for the love of this country, just our fellow Americans.

Mr. Speaker, these are hardworking people, many of them essential workers on the front lines. Unfortunately, with the horrific and insulting effort that was made by the last administration, essential workers were out and about in grocery stores and delivery trucks, first responders, and no one attempted to stop the community spread. We had no testing protocol, and it was in my Congressional district that I worked with United Memorial Hospital to ensure that we had testing sites and opened the first testing site in my Congressional district to reach hard-to-serve areas on March 19.

Mr. Speaker, since that time, we have done 55 with UMMC, a small hospital that I call, "the little red engine that can." But that was all done by the energy and determination in a city that was clearly one of the hotspots as part of the State of Texas, complete inertia by our leadership until we began to see the high numbers of loss of life in the African-American and Latinx community.

Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor today to reinforce my continued and emphatic support for the American Rescue Plan, because I don't see the 500,000 lives as just numbers, I see them as persons who are in need.

This plan will mount a national vaccination program that includes setting up community vaccination sites nationwide. It will also take complementary measures to combat the virus, including scaling up testing and tracing, addressing shortages of personal protective equipment—a real fight against COVID-19 and all of its variants, including the UK, South Africa, and one that is just starting up. It delivers immediate relief to working families. It will give the \$1,400—that will make it \$2,000, increase in the minimum wage as well, and continued unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, let me cite the city of Houston, that we have lost jobs in 9 key service sectors:

Healthcare, 391,000 jobs lost; retail, 303,600 jobs lost; food services, 267,000 jobs lost; finance, 166,000; private education, 63,000; art and entertainment 37,000-plus; accommodations, \$28,000; air transportation, \$20,200.

One of the reasons my motion passed in the Budget Committee to ensure the protection of the public funding where Harris County will receive \$141 billion plus. The city of Houston will receive \$141 billion plus, because we are desperate to provide these dollars for our public resources, our municipal workers, our healthcare workers, our firefighters, our paramedics, our law enforcement, police. We are all in need to continue this fight. We need this money to support struggling communities, as indicated with the loss of jobs in Houston and Harris County.

Mr. Speaker, the plan will provide crucial support for the hardest hit small businesses, and I am glad we have worked to target these small businesses, especially those owned by entrepreneurs from racial and ethnic backgrounds that experienced systemic discrimination, along with EIDL grants that my faith communities and nonprofits are asking about, and as well, the expanded eligibility for those entities and resources for jobs, to protect the jobs of first responders, as I indicated.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear: We are hard hit. If we do not pass the American Rescue Plan, which I intend to support enthusiastically, we will end up with 4 million fewer jobs. It will take us more than a year to return to full employment. We will lower the lifetime earnings of our young generation. Millions of parents, particularly mothers—women have been hurt by this even more—will be forced to stay at home, and another 4 years of suffering before real returns come.

Mr. Speaker, we had to experience this, but we are not going to continue to experience it. Let's support the American Rescue Plan as the Biden administration has asked us to do.